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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the mode of communication and the type of information that best serves an organization's purposes during the orientation interviews of new employees. Preliminary interviews with ten new employees and ten experienced employees indicated task-related performances for oral or written organizational communications--structured tasks were associated with the written mode, unstructured tasks with the oral mode. Based on these interviews, an experiment was designed in which 120 college students were divided into four groups. Two of the groups received orientation information through oral communication, while the other two groups received the information in a written form. For each mode of communication, one group completed a structured task and the other group completed an unstructured task. Half the subjects in each task condition were given job-specific information orally, while the other half of the subjects in the task condition received only written instructions. The results demonstrated the importance of mode of communication in transmitting information to newcomers. Specifically, the subjects receiving written organizational information received higher accuracy scores on their tasks than did those who were exposed to the oral presentations. These scores did not vary as a result of the type of task (structured or unstructured). (RL)

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Mode of Communication in the Encounter Phase of Organizational Socialization

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Mode of Communication in the Encounter Phase of Organizational Socialization

Socialization refers to the process of an individual being acclimated into a new social entity. As it applies to the organizational setting, socialization is that process of learning the norms and values of an organization to enable a new employee to become a functioning member. The socialization process in organizations has been studied at various levels by numerous researchers (Schein, 1956; Merton, 1957; Homans, 1961; Evan, 1963; Schein, 1964; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal, 1964; Berlew and Hall, 1966; Brim, 1966; Schein. 1968; Schein, 1971; Bray, Campbell, and Grant, 1974; Buchanan, 1974; Van Magnen, 1975; Hall, 1976; Wanous, 1976; Van Maanen, and Schein, 1977; Schein, 1978 and 1979). Researchers typically study the evolution of socialization through specified stages. Van Maanen (1976), for example, identifies three stages: anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis. The anticipatory stage involves an individual's first contact with the organization and the formation of his or her initial expectations. The encounter stage involves an individual's first exposure to the work environment, organization policies, and the specific task requirements. The metamorphosis stage is the continuing growth and integration of the individual into the organization.

The encounter stage, which is of primarily interest in this study, is known as the "breaking-in" period; the stage in which the individual learns the basic requirements of his or her new job (Berlew and Hall, 1966; Schein, 1968; Van Maanen, 1976; and Katz, 1979). The individual enters the encounter phase as with a "tabula rasa" concerning specific task procedures and job expectations (Katz, 1979). The function of the encounter phase, therefore, is to clarify a person's role within prevailing organizational

boundaries (Berlew and Hall, 1966; and Schein, 1968). This encounter with organization procedures and expectations is often quite stressful, since "...the individual has few guidelines--other than what the immediate situation supplies--to direct his behavior..." (Van Maanen, 1976, p. 78). The burden of supplying relevant job information is placed on the organization. Once this initial information is provided, the individual molds the information into a useable index for future behavior within the organization. Katz and Kahn (1979) refer to this process as a role episode. This process, then, combines role acquisition with the learning of organizational norms and values. Both provide an individual with information about his or her role in the organization, and about the procedures for meeting the expectations of this role. Since the sending and receiving of role information is vital to the role episode, communication lies at the core of organizational socialization.

Role episodes are affected by the way the organization sends expectations. Specifically, clarity of role information impacts on the correspondence between the sent role and role behavior. Katz (1979) suggests, in fact, that one of the major needs of a new worker is to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty. Weitz (1957) reports that the degree to which an individual is given a clear picture of his or her job duties before actually performing the task may determine whether the individual will stay in or leave the organization. Garfinkel (1967) stresses that the individual continually needs to achieve order within the workplace. Lyons (1971) suggests that restricted role messages contribute to role ambiguity.

The available research indicates that role clarity is instrumental to the establishment of order, reduction of ambiguity, and continuance within an organization. In addition, role clarity is also linked with feelings of

job satisfaction. For example, Raven and Rietsema (1957) observe that goal clarity and especially the clarity of procedures used to achieve one's goals are associated with high levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, discrepancies in role expectations between a supervisor and a subordinate lead to low levels of job satisfaction (Kotter, 1973). In fact, Smith (1957) suggests that lack of role clarity not only impacts on job satisfaction but also reduces a person's rate of productivity. The implication of this research is that lack of role clarity, due to inadequate or ambiguous communication, potentially lowers job satisfaction and worker productivity.

Other researchers suggest that the absence of clear role expectations affects the physical and mental well-being of new workers. Maher and Piersol (1970), for example, report that placing an individual in a situation that requires immediate behavior and presenting that individual with ambiguous expectations leads to worker frustration. Neel (1955) observes that new plant workers who do not receive adequate information about plant activities are more nervous than workers who received complete information. Cohen's (1959) study demonstrates a similar increase in anxiety when goal paths are ambiguous. Katz (1979) suggests that new workers need to clarify their organizational identities in order to function in an atmosphere of psychological safety and security. This research, while not conclusive of all studies on role clarity, presents evidence that lack of communication clarity adversely affects the socialization of a new employee.

Although role clarity is an essential component of successful socialization, no research examines the mode of communicating with new employees, particularly during the encounter phase. The studies that concentrate on communication channels in the organization usually compare modes and direction of communication. Most studies indicate that more than one channel of

communication (for instance, oral and written) should be used for conducting the organization's communication activities. Existing research does not relate modes of communication to the socialization process.

The following studies examined the role of communication in organizational socialization. Lawsh, Holmes and Turnail (1951) conducted a review of organizational handbook types. Such factors as word choice and style were studied. They measured how effectively handbooks conveyed information to employees and they concluded that employees preferred written handbooks accompanied by a talk or discussion to clarify information. Lull, Funk and Piersol (1955) surveyed the presidents of the 100 largest corporations in the U.S. Based on an eleven-question instrument, they concluded that the important organizational policies should be transmitted orally or in combination with written media and oral communication was believed to be at least as important as written communication, if not more so. In fact, most presidents felt that oral communication was a significant factor in managerial effectiveness. Smith, Richetto and Zima (1977) reviewed the literature on directions of communication flow. The results of their summary suggested that dissemination of information through multi-modes is superior to reliance on any one single method, especially for downward communication. Brenner and Sigband's (1973) survey of a major aerospace firm revealed that managers felt that oral communication was secondary to written messages in overall importance. However, they also reported that 75% of the communication that occurred in the organization was processed through oral channels.

Dahle (1953) addressed the problem of dissemination of organizational information by various modes. His research was divided into three samples consisting of 1030 college undergraduates, 100 industrial employees, and 433 business employees. In each instance, the subjects were given pertinent

organizational information and tested for accuracy of recall. The subjects in each sample were broken into treatment groups, each exposed to a different method of information dissemination (oral only, written only, oral plus written, etc.). Dahle's findings suggested that the most effective dissemination of information was, in order: a combination of written and oral channels; oral only: written only; bulletin board and finally, the grapevine. Although the study was not aimed at new employees (defined by Dahle as less than one year in the company), he discovered that the best methods of dissemination for these people differed from methods for the old employees. For example, new employees in both samples received lower scores on the ten question recall instrument, when they received oral but not written information.

The impact of Dahle's work is twofold. First, although it is the most comprehensive work on methods of information dissemination, it fails to determine if variations in type of information affects the best mode for disseminating that information. Dahle's study included primarily general information, such as insurance benefits. Task-related information, which is a crucial concern in the encounter phase of socialization, was not included in the study. Second, Dahle's findings suggest that an apropriate method of dissemination for an old employee may not necessarily be suited to the role clarity needs of newcomers.

The use of realistic job-previews represents an attempt to increase the clarity of information given to an individual during the encounter phase. Organizations that apply this principle consistently reduce the turnover rate of newcomers (Wanous, 1977). Unfortunately, however, no research has determined which method of communication is most effective in transmitting job-preview information.

In conclusion, research shows that every new member of an organization undergoes a process of socialization into the new system. Critical to this process is the ability of the newcomer to assume a role consistent with organization expectations. During the encounter phase of socialization, a new worker receives organizational and task-specific information that influences the way the newcomer assumes his or her role. Communication is the central activity in this process of information dissemination. The individual, as well as the entire organization, benefits from increased role clarity. Moreover, research indicates that the use of multi-modes of communication enhances clarity and retention of information. Also, the length of time the receiver has worked in an organization affects receptivity to particular modes of communication. Van Maanen (1976) wrote:

> The outcomes of the organizational socialization process are determined largely by the organization's ability to select and utilize methods which communicate to the participants in a clear and precise manner what relevant role behavior will lead to the available valued rewards (p. 74).

It is no longer sufficient to suggest, as Van Maanen has, that the organization must determine the methods that best communicate relevant information to new employees. This study addresses what mode of communication and type of information can best serve the organization's purposes during the encounter phase of socialization.

Informational Interviews

As a supplement to the studies cited above, arrangements were made with Purdue University's Personnel Office to conduct informational interviews with ten new employees. The open-ended, exploratory questions aimed to provide researchers with insights into the percieved effectiveness of oral and written communication during the encounter phase of socialization. Ten

participants who had been employed at Purdue University for less than six months were interviewed. The questions in each interview centered on the following topics: (1) initial contact with the university; (2) the interview prior to receiving job assignment; (3) the interview with an immediate supervisor; (4) the method/methods of communication used to disseminate information to the new employee prior to receiving job assignment; (5) the method of communication used to convey information to the new employee upon receiving the job assignment; (6) the predominate methods of communication used to convey task-related information during the first two days on the job, and, (7) the preference of the new employee for written, oral, or a combination of communication modes. Before each interview, the interviewee was assured that his or her response would be kept confidential.

These interviews provided supplementary information to aid the researchers in designing a laboratory experiment. The researchers found that new employees responded to their socialization based upon two types of jobs: structured tasks and unstructured work. Those holding structured jobs were governed by routine, clearly-defined procedural norms and had limited flexibility in making decisions. Those holding less structured jobs were not constrained by procedural norms and were allowed flexibility in decision making.

The following trends emerged from the interviews: (1) employees with less structured jobs preferred oral methods of communication to convey task-related information; (2) employees with structured jobs preferred written methods to convey task-related information; (3) employees in both groups felt that task-related information could be conveyed most effectively by a combination of written and oral methods; (4) the structured job holders felt that they would benefit from obtaining written information concerning

benefits, insurance, and sick-pay; (5) the less structured group felt that this type of written information contributed to information overload.

These informational interviews were consistent with previous research and they suggested new areas for exploration. The perceptions of newcomers were consistent with Dahle's (1953) findings that a combination of both written and oral methods of communication is the most desirable mode of information dissemination. On the other hand, the perceptions of those interviewed varied in accordance with the type of job they held. For example, individuals who held structured jobs preferred written methods of communicating task-related information; conversely, those who held less structured jobs clearly favored oral methods. These perceptions suggest that job structure might affect clarity in communicating role expectations to new employees.

Generation of Research Questions

The hypotheses for this study emanate from previously cited literature and the insights gained from the informational interviews. They fall into three broad areas: organization information, method of dissemination, and job structure.

As previously mentioned, Dahle's (1953) study does not examine the dissemination of task-specific, organizational information. Hence, different types of information may interact with modes of communication. The following hypothesis is advanced. (1) New employees who receive written general information will differ in accuracy scores from those who receive the same information orally. Very little research has addressed the channel of information transmission to new employees during the encounter phase of socialization. Even though Dahle's (1953) study revealed that a combination

of written and oral channels is most effective, his work is not applied to the socialization process nor to specific task information. Our interviews with new employees indicate that retention of task-specific information is an important factor. This finding suggests a possible difference in the overall effectiveness of oral versus written channels.

Two other hypotheses are related to the first one. These hypotheses, however, concern the information a new employee receives about a specific job. Again, based on the interviews and the literature review of socialization, we propose that: (2) new employees who are exposed to written rather than oral job information will perform differently on task assignments. Another factor that enters into this performance is the type of job an individual assumes. Our interviews with new employees suggests that job structure influences the way socialization materials are received. Specifically, employees who perform more structured tasks prefer written modes of job information while those who work in unstructured situations are satisfied with oral transmission of job information. Hence, we hypothesize that: (3) job structure will interact with mode of communication to influence task performance.

Methods

The specific focus of this study centered on three factors: (1) the difference in retention of written and oral channels of transmitting general organizational information to new employees; (2) a comparison of channel effectiveness for transmitting task-specific job information; and (3) the influence of task structure and mode of transmission on job performance.

Procedures

The study was a laboratory experiement that involved 120

students enrolled in basic communication classes. The subjects were randomly assigned to one of four different conditions. The first stage of the study involved the transmission of organizational information. All subjects received the information on Creative-Minded Industries, Inc., as presented in Appendix A. But in two of the groups, the information was transmitted orally to the subjects by one of the experimenters. In the other two groups, subjects received copies of the socialization information and read the material without oral input from the experimenter. Each subject, then, completed the ten item organizational information form.

For transmission of task-specific information, two groups received a structured task and two received an unstructured job. Hence, for each group that received the oral transmission of general organizational information, one of them worked on a structured task and one completed an unstructured task. Similarly, the two groups that received written organizational information were split, one group assigned to a structured task and one to an unstructured task. Half of the subjects in each task condition received job specific information orally while the other half received only the written instructions. Hence, within each type of job structure, some individuals received oral information and others received the written explanation. Then each subject completed his or her assigned task according to the directions. For both the organizational information and the task-specific information, individuals were exposed either to an oral or a written mode of communication.

Instruments

General organizational information was presented in an instrument similar to the one used by Dahle (1953). The instrument described the organization's benefit package as well as general procedural information, such as time to report to work and coffee breaks. No task-specific infor-

mation was included in the instrument. The organization, "Creative-Minded Industries, Inc.," was fictional (Appendix A). Retention of information was measured by a ten-question, four-item multiple choice test (Appendix B). Each item had only one correct response and scores on this form were computed by summing the correct responses across the ten items.

Two types of task-specific information were examined in this study: structured and unstructured. The tasks used to represent these two structures conformed to the characteristics identified during the informational interviews. The tasks were selected from Shaw's (1963) collection of small group tasks. He rated these tasks on eleven dimensions; six of them characterized structured and unstructured jobs. Table 1 indicates the task ratings for each of the six relevant dimensions. Although the structured and the unstructured tasks vary in degree of difficulty, the less difficult unstructured task rated higher in intellectual-manipulative requirements than did the more difficult structured task.

TABLE 1

	less-structured task	highly-structured task
decision verifiability	2.77	6.82
difficulty	2.50	5.95
goal-clarity	5.75	5.25
goal-path multiplicity	6.42	3.45
intellectual-manipulative requirements	6.35	5.81
soluation multiplicity	6.21	0.79

The unstructured task required a participant to think of ten unusual uses for a common household object (Parnes and Meadow, 1959). The

structured task consisted of ten crypts to be unscrambled within ten minutes (Cattell and Stice, 1960). In each instance, job performance was measured by the number of correct responses.

Design and Statistical Analysis

This study employed three independent measures (organizational information mode, job structure, and mode of communication) and two dependent variables (socialization information scores and task performance scores). Hence initially the study was a 2 x 2 x 2 repeated measures design with mode of communication nested in job structure. But a problem occurred during the experiment and the cell sizes for this design became disproportionate. Since BMD-8V could not take unequal cell sizes, two ANOVAs were used to test the hypotheses. The first ANOVA tested for oral and written modes of organizational information by job structure for the socialization scores. The second ANOVA tested for differences in task performance scores for structured and unstructured tasks with oral versus written communication. For each of these ANOVAs the cell size was 30 subjects.

Results

Results of this study demonstrated the importance of mode of communication in transmitting information to newcomers. Specifically, the first hypothesis was confirmed. Subjects who received written organizational information received higher accuracy scores than did those who were exposed to the oral presentation ($F=29.62$; $df=1,116$; $p<.001$). These scores did not vary as a result of the type of task. It appeared that written transmission aided retention of information about organizational policies, regardless of task structure. However, as Table 2 presents, the mean scores for both

written and oral transmission were in the same overall range ($\bar{w}$=7.56; $\bar{o}$=6.20). Both groups scored at least half of the items correctly.

Hypothesis 2 was also confirmed in that subjects who received written information on both structured and unstructured tasks received higher performance scores than did those exposed to oral messages ($F=7.36$; $df=1,116$; $p<.01$). It should be noted, however, that the mean scores for the two groups were in the same overall range ($\bar{w}$=5.68; $\bar{o}$=4.60) but the written mode produced more task solutions than did the oral channel. The third hypothesis was not confirmed. Job structure did not interact with mode of communication to influence task performance ($F=.503$; $df=1,116$; NS). In fact, task specific performance scores were quite similar for the structured and unstructured tasks (written-$\bar{s}$, 7.69; $\bar{u}$, 7.12; oral-$\bar{s}$, 5.95; $\bar{u}$, 6.47). Hence, the major factor that contributed to job performance was the mode of communicating task directions. Comparisons between organizational information mode and job structure also yielded no interaction effects. Hence, job structure did not interact with mode of communication, either for the organizational or the task-specific information.

Discussion

This study focused on the relationship between organizational information, task structure, and mode of communication, for a person undergoing the encounter phase of the socialization process. Initially, we questioned whether the task structure interacted with mode of communication to affect task performance. We questioned whether a structured task would require written instructions while an unstructured task would need only oral explanation. This assumption was not supported in this study.

Instead, the study yielded support for the superiority of written communication over oral messages in briefing newcomers about organizational

policies and job-specific information. This finding contradicted the literature on oral versus written modes of communication in organizations. Specifically, Dahle (1954) found that print medium when used without oral messages was the third most effective channel of communication. Similarly, Melcher and Beller (1967) reported that written communication was only effective when used as a reinforcement of oral messages. But their findings pertained to downward communication with experienced employees.

The socialization situation is different in two ways: (1) new employees are inundated with information. Thus, in situations of information overload where employees lack a sense of organizational history, written information may aid comprehension and retention of facts. That is, new employees, unlike their organizational veterans, lack a frame of reference for classifying information. Hence, written messages not only provide a written record, but also specify the policies and the way these policies fit into a larger scheme. In effect, in the absence of organizational history, written information provides a referent point for making sense out of the massive array of facts that newcomers receive. Also, the organizational training program is a form of formal socialization. Since written communication is viewed as a more formal medium than oral communication (Melcher and Beller, 1967), written information is a logical outgrowth of a formal training program.

However, interpretations of these results should be tempered by several limitations. First, the subjects in this study were college students, not new organization employees. Research on other organization variables has criticized the widespread us of college subjects as a means from which to generalize actual organizational settings (Hill, 1979). Dahle (1954), however, did find in research similar to this study that the results of the college sample were consistent with the results of the two organization

samples. Second, the organization information instrument had not been used in previous research, nor tested for reliability. Furthermore, this instrument contained more information than did either of the two task instruments. These factors affect the conclusions that can be drawn from the first hypothesis. Finally, the structured and unstructured tasks used in this experiment were adapted from tasks originally designed for small-group studies. Therefore, the proven reliability of these task instruments (Shaw, 1963) may or may not be qualified.

Future research might examine the amount, type, and mode of communication on the initial session of formal socialization. The amount of information received in combination with the mode may affect perceptions of the organization and satisfaction with the training. It appears that mode of communication is linked to retention of details. Hence, outcome measures for future research should consider the importance of retention in the training of new employees. Also, future studies should explore various combinations and ordering patterns of oral and written modes of communication. Melcher and Beller (1967) argue that it is inappropriate to recieve written communiques prior to discussion of these messages at formal meetings. Since a number of organizations provide newcomers with written material prior to formal training, it would be interesting to explore the effects of early exposure to information on the perceptions of new employees. Socialization is an important domain of organizational research and communication plays a critical role in this process. We need more research which addresses the ways that organizations communicate with their new members.

TABLE 2

Mean Scores on Organizational Information and Job Performance

Mode of Communication	Organizational Information	Job Performance
Written	7.56	5.68
Oral	6.20	4.60

	Job Structure			
	S	U	S	U
Written	5.54	5.93	7.69	7.12
Oral	4.76	4.59	5.95	6.47

Appendix A

Creative-Minded Industries, Inc. is pleased to have you as one of its new employees. During this briefing session you will be given various information relating to Creative-Minded Industries' policies and responsiblities of your job. As you know, you have been hired as a Creative-Minded Industries Cryptologist Trainee. In assuming this position, the following company information will be helpful to you. You should make every effort to retain this information as quickly as possible. Creative-Minded Industries, Inc. has established a full-protection benefits package for you which includes the following: (1) You are automatically covered by Protectors of America Insurance Company for any accident which occurs to you while on the working premise, or on company assigned business, regardless of location, during the course of the normal work day. This coverage includes all medical costs and wage compensation suffered through losses of work time for a period not to exceed six consecutive months. Should you suffer any physical injury while at work, you should immediately contact Sonia Smith, Personnel Coordinator, in room 6 of the corporate office building. (2) The Rock of America Insurance Company has established a joint sickness/hospitilization policy in the amount of $20,000 for which you are eligible. Creative-Minded Industries will pay 7/8 of your yearly premium if you decide to accept this policy. The total cost to you (per year, excluding the portion payed by Creative-Minded Industries) is $37.50. Should you decide to begin this coverage you must fill out form A-3 (the white form) located on the desk up front. If you desire, the $37.50 will be pro-rated monthly and automatically deducted from your pay-check. You can, of course, pay the Rock of America Insurance Company directly. Should you decide to have the premium taken from your check, you will need to see George Jones, payroll assistant, in room 8 of the corporate office building before the end of this week to remain eligible. (3) As a Creative-Minded Industries employee, you will be eligible to design your own individually based retirement program. All employees are eligible for this. The company does require, however, that you satisfactorily complete your six-month training program before you apply for this benefit. After your supervisor has evaluated your six months' performance, you will be referred to Garnett Wilson, assistant director of the retirement fund, to design your program. (4) After satisfactorily completing your first month's working assignments, you'll be entitled to the following standard allowances:

A. 5 paid sick days per year
B. 2 paid personal leave days per year
C. 1 week vacation after the first year

As a new Creative-Minded Industries employee, you will be expected to conform to the following organizational policies:

1. The work day begins at 7:45. Tardiness will not be tolerated.
2. The work day ends at 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.
3. You will be allowed one 15-minute coffee break at 9:00 am each day, and one 10-minute coffee break at 2:00 pm each day.
4. Lunch hour is from 11:30-12:30; you may leave the premises but you must be ready to begin work promptly at 12:30.
5. You will be expected to work from 8:00 am to 11:30 am one Saturday per month. Your supervisor will coordinate scheduling.
6. You should wear appropriate dress to work each day and maintain good personal hygeine.

Your supervisor is Sam Pruitt. His office is in room 2 of the general work building. Should you have any questions about your specific work assignment, Mr. Pruitt is the man to see. During the next two weeks you have been assigned a "partner" to work with. Your partner is an experienced company employee that can help show you the ropes. At this time, you should report to floor 2 in the general work building to meet your supervisor, and get a copy of your work procedure requirement form. Your supervisor will introduce you to your partner. Again, good luck at Creative-Minded Industries, Inc. and welcome aboard.

Appendix B

1. In the case of accident while at work, which of the following people should you contact?

   A. Sam Pruitt
   B. Sonia Smith
   C. Garnett Wilson
   D. George Jones

2. I am eligible for the company retirement fund:

   A. Immediately
   B. Upon satisfactorily completing my first month as an employee
   C. Upon satisfactorily completing my first six months as an employee
   D. Upon satisfactorily completing my first year as an employee

3. My total cost for the sickness/hospitalization policy will be:

   A. $37.50 per year
   B. 7/8 of my normal wage
   C. 1/8 of my normal wage
   D. $37.50 per month

4. After completing the first month of work assignments, I am eligible for _____.

   A. 5 paid personal leave days per year
   B. 5 paid personal leave days per month
   C. 2 paid personal leave days per month
   D. 2 paid personal leave days per year

5. My coffee breaks will be at

   A. 9 am and 2 pm
   B. 7:45 am and 2 pm
   C. 9 am and 12:45 pm
   D. 9:30 am and 1:45 pm

6. If I need to see my supervisor I should go to:

   A. Room 6 of the corporate office building
   B. Room 8 of the corporate office building
   C. Room 2 of the general office building
   D. Room 6 of the general office building

7. My specific work requirements will be given to me by:

   A. My partner
   B. The "work procedure requirement form"
   C. My supervisor
   D. George Jones

8. Which of the following statements is incorrect?

   A. I am expected to wear appropriate dress each day
   B. My training program lasts two months
   C. I am expected to work from 8 am to 11:30 am one Saturday per month
   D. My supervisor is Sam Pruitt.

9. I will be under the constant supervision of my partner for approximately:

   A. 6 months
   B. 2 months
   C. 6 weeks
   D. 2 weeks

10. For which of the company benefit policies can I also sign up for my spouse?

   A. The accident policy
   B. The sickness/hospitalization
   C. The retirement policy
   D. None of the above policies